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AUTHOR West, Keith
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ABSTRACT

Radio theater production has been a component of secondary and post-secondary education since the late 1920s. Since the reduction in radio theater in the 1950s, such courses have been used to prepare students for other fields--television, film, etc. Radio theater production can be approached in two ways: classic production and modern production. Elements of classic production are performed in one take and instantly combined, usually before a studio audience; productions tend to be relatively short (15-30 minutes), and production elements are not complicated. Modern production style is closely related to motion picture techniques; elements are produced separately, allowing for multiple takes. These elements are combined during a post-production process, and productions can be longer (30-90 minutes) than classic style allows. Classic radio theater allows the educator another tool to teach production techniques applicable to other areas, as well as a performance alternative to these areas. Application in broadcast/electronic media and theater favors short rehearsal sessions, self-contained class projects, flexible staging, little cost addition, casting against physical type, and introduction to the performing arts. In communication/electronic media, classic radio theater also allows for theater of the mind, live remote productions and audience expansion. (An attached diagram outlines differences between classic and modern radio theater.) (NKA)

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CLASSIC RADIO THEATRE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Keith West, Lecturer of Communication and Theatre

Sul Ross State University

Alpine, Texas

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Since the late 1920's, radio theatre production has been a component of secondary and post-secondary education programs. Until the mid-1950's, communication, broadcast, and theatre courses prepared students for employment in the field. Since the reduction in radio theatre in this country, radio theatre has been used to prepare students for other fields (television, film, stage, et al).

Radio theatre production can be divided into two approaches: classic production and modern production. Classic production is similar to stage theatre production. Production elements (voice, mechanical SFX, recorded SFX, music) are performed in one take and instantly combined, usually before a studio audience. Productions tend to be relatively short (15-30 minutes) and production elements are not complicated. Modern production style is closely related to motion picture production techniques. Production elements are produced separately, allowing for multiple takes. These elements are combined during a post-production process. Voice tracks are produced first, with SFX and music created around this final version. Productions can be longer than classic style allows (30-90 minutes), and complicated sound effects/sound processing become options.

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Classic readio theatre allows the educator another tool to teach production techniques applicable to other areas, as well as a performance alternative to these areas. Music, theatre, art, literature, communication, and electronic media (broadcasting) all can benefit from classic radio theatre. The following outline positive application in two area: broadcast/electronic media and theatre.

<u>THEATRE/DRAMATIC ARTS-Secondary and Post-Secondary Education</u>

* SHORT REHEARSAL SESSIONS: Stage plays require weeks of rehearsal, involving voice development, memorization, staging, technical production. Classic radio theatre eliminates the need for staging and absolute memorization of lines. A fifteen minute script can be prepared in 10-14 days during class periods.
* COST EFFICIENT: Classic radio theatre eliminates complicated sets, set dressings, hand props, costumes, and make-up. A simple backdrop or projected images, existing lighting, and chairs for the performers are required. Script royalties are usually low or not applicable.
* SELF-CONTAINED CLASS PROJECT: Students can be involved in all aspects of production: script writing, sound effects, acting, technical production, administration. The scope of most productions allows beginners to take major roles in each aspect.
* FLEXIBLE STAGING: Classic radio theatre can be produced in almost any location (auditoriums, cafeterias, gyms, classrooms). Lack of extensive recording equipment also makes these productions excellent traveling shows. Allows the program to reach new audiences.

* ADDITION TO PRODUCTION BILL: In this day of decreasing performing arts budgets, educators are eager for ways to maintain the number of productions in a season and reduce the overall cost. Classic radio theatre involves little disposable cost per show, once capital equipment has been purchased.
* CAST AGAINST PHYSICAL TYPE: Classic radio theatre allows students to experience roles/parts that might not be available in stage performances. There are few physical, racial, or gender barriers; the key is voice quality.
* INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMING ARTS: Classic radio theatre production does not require elements objectionable to students (make-up, costumes, memorizing lines).

<u>COMMUNICATION/ELECTRONIC MEDIA-Secondary and Post-Secondary Education</u>

* THEATRE OF THE MIND: Creative radio drama writing and production techniques can be applied to audio commercials/promos/PSAs, books-on-tape, film, and television projects, as well as to existing radio theatre.
* COST EFFICIENT: Classic radio theatre eliminates complicated sets, set dressings, hand props, costumes, and make-up found in television and film productions. Also, classic radio theatre does not require expensive multi-track recording equipment. Broadcast rights are usually inexpensive or not applicable.
* EXPAND AUDIENCES/INCREASE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Classic radio theatre allows for studio audiences to observe the production process. Most educational television and film sound stages do not allow for extensive audience seating.

* LIVE REMOTE PRODUCTIONS: Most radio remotes involve a DJ at a local business, new events, or the occasional simulcast concert. Classic radio theatre involves all of these elements combined and broadcast in real time.
* INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMING ARTS: Production elements objectionable to students in theatre are also found in television and film production (make-up, costumes, memorizing lines).
* SELF-CONTAINED CLASS PROJECT: See above.
* FLEXIBLE STAGING: See above.
* CAST AGAINST PHYSICAL TYPE: See above.

Classic radio theatre certainly has a place in modern education. The skills involved in all aspects of the art can be applied to more popular entertainment media, and the productions serve as another option for performing arts producers.

PRIMARY RADIO THEATRE PRODUCTION STYLES

CLASSIC RADIO THEATRE	MODERN RADIO THEATRE
* 15-30 minutes running time	* 30-60+ minutes running time
* Production elements performed and recorded simultaneously	* Production elements performed separately and electronically combined
* One take only (live)	* Unlimited takes
* Simple productions-few and less complicated elements	* Complicated productions -increased number and more complex elements
* Short dialogue passages-more reliance on action	* Longer dialogue passages-less reliance on action
* Audience affects timing and performances during production	* Audience not involved in production process
* Intended for ear and eye	* Intended solely for ear
* Choose sound effects based on sound and visual impact (mechanical and recorded sounds)	* Choose sound effects based on sound (usually recorded sounds)
* Theatrical stage production style	* Motion picture/ television production style